

**In the Claims:**

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application. Claims 1 and 20 have been amended. Claims 5, 7, 10, 12, and 22 have been cancelled without prejudice. No new matter has been added.

1. (Currently Amended) A strengthening apparatus to strengthen the torso and abdominal region, comprising:

a frame having an interior portion;

supporting members, wherein the supporting members are coupled to the frame and positioned to rest on the shoulders of a user, wherein the user is positioned within the interior portion of the frame during use; and

cross segments coupled to the frame;

wherein the frame comprises an arc member and a linear member, wherein the linear member couples to the arc member to form a semi-oval shape;

wherein the cross segments comprise a fitting member configured to receive a weight;

wherein the frame is substantially oval in shape and is open on one side, the side opposite the open side defining a closed portion, and

wherein the supporting members comprise a first end and a second end, wherein the first end is coupled to the open side of the frame and the second end is coupled to the closed portion of the oval.

2. (Original) An apparatus as claimed in claim 1, wherein the supporting members are adjustable.

3. (Currently Amended) An apparatus as claimed in claim 1, ~~further comprising~~ wherein the cross segments are releasably coupled to the frame.

4. (Original) An apparatus as claimed in claim 1, further comprising cross segments coupled to the frame.

5. (Canceled) An apparatus as claimed in claim 1, wherein the frame comprises an arc member and a linear member, wherein the linear member couples to the arc member to form a semi-oval shape.

6. (Original) An apparatus as claimed in claim 5, wherein the supporting members comprise a first end and a second end, the first end being coupled to the arc member and the second end being coupled to the linear member.

7. (Canceled) An apparatus as claimed in claim 3, wherein the cross segments comprise a fitting member configured to receive a weight.

8. (Currently Amended) An apparatus as claimed in claim 7 1, wherein the fitting member is releasably coupled to the cross segment.

9. (Original) An apparatus as claimed in claim 1, wherein the supporting members are flexible.

10. (Canceled) An apparatus as claimed in claim 1, wherein the frame is substantially oval in shape and is open on one side, the side opposite the open side defining a closed portion.

11. (Original) An apparatus as claimed in claim 1, wherein the supporting members are contoured to create a spacing for a user's neck.

12. (Canceled) An apparatus as claimed in claim 10, wherein the supporting members comprise a first end and a second end, wherein the first end is coupled to the open side of the frame and the second end is coupled to the closed portion of the oval.

13. (Original) An apparatus as claimed in claim 1, wherein the frame further comprises a hinge mechanism such that the frame can be folded.

14. (Currently Amended) An apparatus as claimed in claim 5 1, wherein the arc member further comprises a hinge member, and the linear member further comprises a hinge member, wherein the hinge member of the arc member and the hinge member of the linear member are aligned such that the frame can be folded.

15. (Canceled) A strengthening apparatus to strengthen the torso and abdominal region, comprising:

a frame;

supporting members coupled to the frame; and

cross segments coupled to the frame, wherein the cross segments comprise a fitting member configured to receive a weight.

16. (Canceled) An apparatus as claimed in claim 15, wherein the fitting member is releasably coupled to the cross segment.

17. (Canceled) A strengthening apparatus to strengthen the torso and abdominal region, comprising:

a frame; and

cross segments coupled to the frame, the cross segments comprising a fitting member configured to receive a weight.

18. (Canceled) An apparatus as claimed in claim 17, further comprising supporting members coupled to the frame.

19. (Canceled) An apparatus as claimed in claim 17, wherein the fitting member is releasably coupled to the cross segment.

20. (Currently Amended) A strengthening apparatus to strengthen the torso and abdominal region, comprising:

a frame, the frame comprising a first member and a second member, the first member and second member having a central portion, a first end and a second end, the first member and second member being coupled together at the first ends and second ends, and

supporting members, wherein the supporting members comprise a first end and a second end, the first end being coupled to the first member nearer the central portion of the first member and the second end being coupled to the second member nearer the central portion of the second member;

wherein the first member is coupled to the second member to form a semi-oval shape, the first member being disposed in front of a user during use and the second member being disposed behind a user during use.

21. (Previously Presented) An apparatus as claimed in claim 20, wherein the first member is adapted to be gripped by a user during use.

22. (Canceled) An apparatus as claimed in claim 20, wherein the first member is coupled to the second member to form a semi-oval shape, the first member being disposed in front of a user during use and the second member being disposed behind a user during use.

23. (Canceled) A strengthening apparatus to strengthen the torso and abdominal region, comprising:

a frame, the frame comprising an arc member and a linear member, wherein the linear member couples to the arc member to form a semi-oval shape, and supporting members, the supporting members comprising a first end and a second end, the first end being coupled to the arc member and the second end being coupled to the linear member.